

5 Ways Reading Improves Your Health

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Book lovers know there's no feeling like getting lost in a great book. Page after page seems to fly by as you get more and more entrenched in the plot and character development. It's almost as if you're in the scenes and participating in the outcome. What you may not realize, however, is this activity is not only fun, but also great for your health! Check out these five surprising health benefits of reading.

1) Reduced Stress

When you get caught up in a great book and all your thoughts are consumed by the plot and characters, it seems like your everyday worries and stresses disappear. Not only does it seem that way, but it's actually a proven fact! This 2009 study (<http://t.umbl.com/redirect?z=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.kumon.co.uk%2Fblog%2Freading-reduces-stress-levels%2F&t=M2FIzjk0ZGY5N2ZmNzNkZDNmZjhMDdjYTI3OWNkOWNhYWFMzgwNSxQQIVPSnJrVg%3D%3D&b=t%3AEeANOZdLOD75smLgFmEnKw&p=hways-reading-improves-your-health&m=1>) proves that reading for only six minutes can reduce stress by 68 percent, as well as slow your heart rate and minimize muscle tension. After a stressful day at work, instead of turning on the television, crack open a great book or fire up the Kindle in order to relax.

2) Improved Memory

Ok, maybe this one isn't too surprising. Just like your muscles, your brain loves a good workout too. Reading regularly exercises your noggin, and all those synapses firing can actually improve your memory. In addition, a recent study (<http://t.umbl.com/redirect?z=http%3A%2F%2Fabcnews.go.com%2FHealth%2Fstory%3Fid%3D117588%26page%3D1%23.UblVc2RAR7t&t=NDA5YzU4MTRkYTQyYWQ0NWRkMzg2ODY3ways-reading-improves-your-health&m=1>) showed that elderly people who read regularly are 2.5 times less likely to get Alzheimer's disease.

3) Younger Brain

Of course we can't stop the aging process (as much as we'd like to), but reading can help slow it down. This study (<http://t.umbl.com/redirect?z=http%3A%2F%2Fneurology.org%2Fcontent%2Fearly%2F2013%2F07%2F03%2FWNL.0b013e31829c5e8a&t=YzEzYWlxYzRjOGE0NTIhNTkzN2JMTg1MmQ1Nways-reading-improves-your-health&m=1>) showed that reading can significantly reduce your rate of cognitive decline. So curl up with a good book each night if you want to keep that brain young and spry.

4) Increased Empathy

Who knew that reading books could make you a nicer person? Apparently getting emotionally absorbed in a book carries over into real life. This study (<http://t.umbl.com/redirect?z=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.plosone.org%2Farticle%2Finfo%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0055341%23s4&t=ZGRhYTFIZTU5NmY3MGZmYWYzN2ZzZGFjZways-reading-improves-your-health&m=1>) found that people who regularly immerse themselves in fictional stories are more empathetic. Even though the characters are fictional, relating to their situations causes us to be more open to real people in our lives.

5) Increased Tolerance for Uncertainty

Let's be honest, all of us have struggled with ambiguity or lack of control in personal situations in the past. It can be stressful not knowing the future. Surprisingly, one easy way to cope is to read more. One study (<http://t.umbl.com/redirect?z=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tandfonline.com%2Fdoi%2Fabs%2F10.1080%2F10400419.2013.783735%23preview&t=YzFiNDYwZTgyN2Q5YWQ1ODg4ZjI3MWU3Nways-reading-improves-your-health&m=1>) showed that reading fiction can cause an increase in tolerance for uncertainty. As people dive deeper and deeper into fictional stories and characters, their minds actually open up, and they become more comfortable with possibilities, options, and uncertainty.

Everyone knows reading is fun, but the benefits outlined above can really improve your health and life. If you're reading a lot already, good for you! And if you're not, try to find more time to read if you can. One thing you'll need for sure is...LOTS OF BOOKS!



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